

maybe send days to
Sept. 2 - Max Brooks
Sept. 6 Alice Brown
1965 Sept. 9 - Lawrence R.
Sept. 15 - ~~George~~
Tuesday, September 2nd '68

WHD

Began another phase in the building of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, OPERATION LOOK THEM OVER. Bill Heath, Max Brooks, Roy White and I flew in the Kingair to Independence, Missouri, to see President Truman's Library first. Max had telephoned the two heads of the Library and requested their cooperation in visiting the Library just as architects who would later be working on the Lyndon Johnson Library. They did not mention that I would be coming, and I had carefully not mentioned it to anyone, not even Liz, only, of course, to President Truman, whom I had phoned the night before, partly because deference demands it and partly because I just simply love to see him and Mrs. Truman, but wanted to urge them not to let my presence there be a burden on their time or energy.

When we put down on the little strip in Independence, I almost thought Dale had made a mistake. It was a dirt, or maybe gravel, strip, as rural as the Winter's strip at Johnson City! But one happy result -- no press awaited us at the strip.

Feeling like conspirators on a real adventure, Bill, Max, Roy and I piled into the car. We had spent our flight time (over two hours) reading material Dr. Wayne Grover had sent Max and discussing Libraries, and drove in to the Truman Library.

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There on the steps President Truman himself awaited us, standing quite straight, cane in hand, a big smile, Mrs. Truman right beside him, and I always feel her first interest is to take care of him, and secondly, the guest that they are meeting. I was so delighted to see them, and introduced my fellow conspirators. This time there were a few cameras and one or two people I thought I could identify as press.

Dr. Phillip Brooks, the Director of the Library, a small, unimpressive-looking man, who soon overcomes that first picture because he is so knowledgeable and so devoted to his job, was with us the whole way.

We went in President Truman's office for a little visit first, to explain what we were doing and why, and then he gave us the tour, with Max asking all sorts of architectural questions -- storage, humidity, traffic routing, vaults for documents that were yet restricted, and Bill Heath looking at it with the eyes of a plain tourist and of a Regent who is about to spend several millions of the University's money in erecting a building to house a similar project. And I going along with a curious mixture of thought divided between two currents: one, of seeing President Truman, now really growing old, and Mrs. Truman, who is quite

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hale and hearty and so sensibly solicitous of him, listening to the drama of him explaining the Library, the story of his life, and observing his pride and pleasure in it, and wondering to myself whether some day Lyndon and I would present such a picture. And the other current of thought, Max's, Bill's, and Roy's, who had never before seen a Presidential Library, was, "So this is what a Library is like. Can we do it better? Is it worth the sizeable commitment we have made to it?" And, looking at it through their eyes, I wondered how it could be a better reflection of the man, the period, and his influence on the period.

Some things I began to see with new eyes. The Presidential papers themselves, grey, anonymous, box after box, identically bound, hidden from the world on shelves behind locked doors, awaiting the very few scholars who come -- the public comes in thousands and the scholars in trickles. Some more dramatic use ought to be made of them, those papers. They could still be secure behind glass partitions, some use could be made of color, there could be some displays highlighting the outstanding achievements of a President's years. Putting it in terms of Lyndon, there might be a display on the Education Bill -- what led up to it, what it would mean to John and Mary Citizen of 1975.

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Mrs. Truman asked us if she could take us to lunch, and of course we were delighted. We went to a place called The Old Apple Farm, actually set in an orchard of crooked apple trees. A rambling farmhouse, with many small rooms, so much atmosphere, with candles and low ceilings and early American antiques, that you wondered if the food was going to measure up. And then it did, most delightfully -- apple fritters, roast chicken, a superb, enormous lunch, With Mrs. Truman talkative, easy, and the President reminiscent and telling jokes. He's really very fond of Lyndon.

Mrs. Truman asked me if I ever saw Roberta Vinson, how Wilma, one of the maids at the White House, was doing. We talked about the grandchildren, Clark and Marny Clifford.

And then when lunch was over, Mrs. Truman said quite firmly (and I would have been shocked if he had countermanded it) that she was going to take President Truman home now, his legs were wearing out a bit. And we all said goodbye, with many thanks, and I especially thinking how glad I would be to some day be in their shoes, to look so calm and content and happy as old age approached.

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And then back to the Library for another hour's session with Dr. Brooks, mostly on storage facilities, and to see how the building itself sits on the 14 acres of land -- very gracefully, in my opinion -- with the Seal of the United States to the left of the columns in the front and, rather surprisingly, the Seal of the Masonic Order to the right. Looking at it from a distance, I decided it must be the Seal of the State of Missouri.

It was about 3:30 when we went to the little airport for the last part of our trip. There had been people with cameras every few feet, and I smiled and waved and stopped for pictures and handed out little autographed cards, letting it impede our progress as little as possible, and feeling really quite pleased in The Old Apple House when the whole roomful of ladies began to clap when I entered and announced that they were schoolteachers from some adjoining town having a holiday. But it's really been an easy, inconspicuous trip.

We flew to Abilene, and once more landed on a quiet and rural air strip. This time word of our coming had preceded us, and there were cameras and microphones as our car pulled up in front of the Library a few minutes before the closing time of 4:30.

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I spoke a few brief candid words of explanation and interest and pleasure in seeing the Libraries, identified my companions, and moved as quickly as I graciously could on inside, where Dr. Ashbocker, Director of the Library, met me.

This is my first trip to the Eisenhower Library, and indeed, I found it was a complex, composed of three parts. The Library itself, which houses the papers, a vast, handsome building of marble that surrounds a very small courtyard, and is strangely cold. And, more than a block away, across the Mall, the Museum itself, much more populated and much less expensive-looking a structure. And, then, finally, the old Eisenhower home, with by far the most atmosphere of any of the three. Authentic Americana of about the first quarter of the century, warm, middleclass, nostalgic, speaking to many of us of our yesterdays.

We spent the first 30 minutes or so in the Library with Dr. Ashbocker, and here I had a rude surprise. Although it had been formally dedicated more than two years ago, as well as I can remember, it is not actually yet functioning and open for scholars. This I cannot explain. I wonder if it is because there are no scholars rampant to get in. And it has that forbidding, unused look. The big Board of Directors Room, which has only

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been used a couple of times in the two years -- I wonder if it had been designed as an office for President Eisenhower, and then, since he did not spend any time in the Library, its somewhat nebulous purpose had been changed.

I think one thing this says to us is that it is good to have the Library where the traffic comes, where the scholars are, on a University campus, and not as far off the beaten track as Abilene, Kansas, even though there were sentimental reasons from boyhood and youth for the President's placing it here.

It was at this point a magnificent, empty tomb. And I could also see Bill Heath falling back and saying to himself, "Is this what a Presidential Library can be like?" And my own feelings were reinforced that the legislation, the Bills, the actions, the decisions of a President, his effect upon his times, could be told much more dramatically, whether in a showcase relating events that led up to the passing of certain legislation or certain decisions, or in some audio-visual method, by a movie of the times, such as they have down at Williamsburg.

And then we were in the Museum, with a very heavy accent on gifts from Chiefs of State, and rich and wonderful they were -- swords with thousands of diamonds and rubies in them, were the

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special choice of many monarchs, notably Moslem ones. And, more charming to me, a display entitled "The Girl that He Married" -- pictures of Mrs. Eisenhower from debutante age on through their White House days -- a truly delightful grouping.

And a display that had a lot of potential, and I would like to follow, with some differences -- that is, of the homes that President Eisenhower had lived in, beginning with the little one he was born in in Denison, Texas. At the door of the Museum, since 5 o'clock had come, they shut out the tourists and the press, while I thanked our lucky stars and kept on walking hastily away with Mr. Earl Endicott, the Curator.

Mr. Endicott told us that the Museum had close to 125 thousand visitors a year, and the Library itself something less than 100 thousand. So there are that many who come who do not even choose to walk across the Mall to see the papers. And here we came upon another strange anomaly. The Library, that rich and handsome building, built by private donation, run by the United States Government -- the Archives, that is -- but the Museum is still owned and run by a private group of Eisenhower's friends who raised the money for the building. And, said Mr. Endicott, "I run it with two other people -- the janitor and the

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ticket seller. It sounds like an impossible task! I think of our own little house at Johnson City and wondered if I could have been hearing him right.

At any rate, the moral is that there should be a melding of both Library and Museum -- at least, so it seems to me -- a melding from which they would both profit and both become more alive, more used, more of an instrument to record and remember history.

It was about 6:30 when we emerged from the last of the three buildings. The most interesting of all, the little Eisenhower home.

And then, remembering that Abilene was where the Chisholm Trail ended and where Lyndon's great-uncle and grandfather had driven their cattle from Johnson City, Texas, to the rail head at Abilene, I said, "Let's see if we can find any of the old part of Abilene." We couldn't. It's gone.

But they had reproduced it as a showplace for tourists, using the old railroad station as the only original building and grouping around it an early pioneer town, complete with saloon and general store and wagon yard. And we drove slowly by it, expecting Marshal Dillon to come riding up any minute. And then

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back to our plane -- we had some sandwiches and some refreshments put aboard, for after our big dinner with President and Mrs. Truman, sandwiches while homeward-bound would suffice and would save time.

It was a pleasant journey back to the ranch, flying over the flat, rich lands of Kansas, as sunset came. Such marvellous fields of grain -- it was something that I believe was soya. And sunflowers everywhere as big as salad plates. You can see why it's called the Sunflower State readily.

In summing up our impressions, Max said: "It's a challenge -- more than I had thought -- to see what we can make of it." And that's what it is to me. Interesting as they were, I want to use every artistry of architects and archivists and staff and family who have loved and saved things through the years, to make ours better.